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PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHNM #0320 0771108
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171108Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4195
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0663
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY
RUZEHAA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 000320

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2012

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: NIGER: MNJ ATTACK IN THE SOUTH; POSSIBLE RANSOM
FOR HOSTAGES

REF: NIAMEY 277 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Donald W. Koran, DCM, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (SBU) The MNJ claims on its website that it attacked the military outpost of Banibangou the night of March 16/17. It claims to have taken two gendarmes prisoner, and captured two vehicles and all of the weapons at the outpost. Police and French Embassy sources confirm the attack, although the details remain sketchy. While the MNJ website locates Banibangou is 200 kms west of Niamey, it is actually about 200 kms north, very near the Malian border. The incident marks the first MNJ attack in southwestern Niger.

12. (U) The Nigerien media gave extensive coverage to the return of 25 hostages who had been held by the MNJ (reftel). The hostages included 24 Nigerien soldiers and the prefet of Tanout. The Khaddafi foundation arranged the hostage release, and the hostages were flown to Niamey March 10 on plane leased by the Khaddafi foundation. The MNJ reportedly continues to hold six hostages (not including any captured in Banibandgou).

13. (C) The French DATT reported that Khaddafi may have paid several hundred thousand dollars to the MNJ to win the release of the hostages. The DATT opined that the MNJ would use the money to buy more weapons.

14. (C) Comment: The fact that the MNJ was apparently able to transport the 25 hostages from the Air mountains to Libya indicates how little control the GON has over its territory and borders. By having announced the release first, the MNJ was able to portray it as a humanitarian gesture, while ridding itself of the burden of caring for the hostages, and possibly receiving a ransom for its efforts.

15. (U) Minimize considered.
ALLEN